

A P P R O V E D
VIRGINIA BOARD OF SOCIAL WORK
MINUTES
INFORMAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2006

TIME & PLACE: The Informal Conference Committee convened at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, March 3, 2006, at the Department of Health Professions, 6603 West Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Valerie Carter-Williams, LCSW, Chair
Catherine Moore, LCSW

STAFF PRESENT: Evelyn B. Brown, Executive Director
Grant Kronenberg, Adjudication Specialist
Arnice Covington, Administrative Assistant
Debra Hay-Pierce, Compliance

OTHERS PRESENT: (Client A)

CONFERENCE SCHEDULED: Susan Avery, LCSW

Ms. Avery appeared before the Informal Conference Committee on Friday, March 3, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. to review allegations that she may have violated portions of the laws and regulations governing the practice of social work in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Chair recognized Client A and invited her comments regarding the allegation. Client A made an opening statement.

The Chair recognized Ms. Avery and invited her comments regarding the allegations. Ms. Avery did not make an opening statement.

Following review of the allegations Ms. Moore moved that the Committee convene a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711(A)(28) of the *Code of Virginia* for the purpose of deliberation to reach a decision in the matter of Ms. Avery regarding the allegations outlined in the Notice of Hearing. Additionally, Ms. Moore moved that Ms. Brown, Ms. Covington, and Mr. Kronenberg attend the closed meeting because their presence in the closed meeting is deemed necessary, and their presence will aid the Committee in its deliberations.

The motion was seconded and carried.

The Committee reconvened in open session.

Ms. Moore moved that the Informal Conference Committee certify that it heard, discussed or considered only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom on Information Act and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened. The motion was seconded and carried.

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW:

After consideration of the evidence and statements concerning the allegations, the Committee made the following findings of fact and conclusions of law:

Ms. Avery violated 18 VAC 140-20-160(5) of the Board of Social Work Regulations in that, from on or about May 20, 2002 to March 22, 2003, she saw individuals for therapy sessions related to a court case over parental visitation with two (2) children, during the course of which Ms. Avery displayed potential bias towards the mother, preventing her from effectively assessing and evaluating the children for visitation with the father. Specifically, Ms. Avery's statements indicate a lack of objectivity on her part, in favor of the children's father and against their mother. Ms. Avery drew conclusions about the mother, such as that she was misinforming the children about their father, without directly conversing with her about the concerns. Ms. Avery failed to address interventions, goals and strategies to improve the likelihood of successful visitations with the father. Additionally, while Ms. Avery documented the children's expressions of certain negative feelings regarding their father, she nonetheless recommended unsupervised visits with him.

ORDER

WHEREFORE, on the basis of the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is hereby ORDERED that NO SANCTION be imposed against Susan Avery, L.C.S.W.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Conference was adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

Valerie Carter-Williams, LCSW

Evelyn B. Brown, Executive Director
Board of Social Work

As provided by law, this decision shall become a Final Order thirty days after the service of such order unless a written request to the Board for a formal hearing on the allegations made against Ms. Avery is received from Ms. Avery within such time. If service of the order is made by mail, three additional days shall be added to that period. Upon such timely request for a formal hearing, the decision of this conference shall be vacated.